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General Debate 3 (a): Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels

3 (b): Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration

Statement submitted by Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council[2]

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1] E/CN.9/2018/1.
[2] The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Fifty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD)

The Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, representing more than a thousand organizations and individuals worldwide working to realize the full sexual and reproductive health and rights of all people, welcomes the fifty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development, focusing on sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration. The Women's Global Network would like to draw the Commission's attention to the issue of limited access to sexual and reproductive health and rights experienced by migrant women worldwide, impacting their personal freedom, mobility, and bodily autonomy. Women in all their diversities — no matter their nationality or citizenship status — must be able to fully enjoy their sexual and reproductive health and rights, as part of realizing their human rights and wellbeing, and as essential to the contribution to the sustainability of cities across the globe.

According to population projections, the number of people living in cities will nearly double between now and 2050, reaching 6.4 billion people. In the world's rapidly growing urban spaces, international migrants represent a critical mass ranging anywhere from one-third to one-half in global cities such Dubai, London and New York. As women take more active roles in the global paid workforce, the concept of the "feminization of migration" has become increasingly more common. However, women in all their diversities, have always been present in migratory flows, often accompanying male migrants and working informally and often more vulnerable to economic, physical and sexual abuse by employers, spouses, and government officials, among others.

As economic trends continue to push viable work opportunities to cities, women continue to migrate across international borders. Today, women represent 48 per cent of the 244 million migrants worldwide. Pervasive gender inequality in the labour market limits many migrant women to work in low-paying jobs with little upward mobility in labour-intensive sectors, such as domestic work, child care, cooking, garment factories, piece work — where they work long hours for low pay and are subject to exploitation. Domestic work presents women with distinct challenges when they are often isolated and sometimes abused, with no benefits or recourse. The many risks migrant women take in seeking and engaging in work are often accompanied by little to no additional benefits and a lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services. Workplace benefits such as flexible hours, family or maternity leave and access to healthcare coverage are rarely encountered by migrant women.

Migrant women engaging in sex work experience constant challenges and violations in relation to their human rights, including little to no access to public services, high instances of sexual assault and threats to their personal safety, and are frequently persecuted within their communities and by law enforcement. These challenges coupled with women's unrealized autonomy over their sexual and reproductive health and rights can perpetuate difficult circumstances and cycles of poverty, while violating women's human rights.

For many migrant women, the fundamental right to access public health services such as sexual and reproductive health information and services is often limited or withheld completely. Although sexual and reproductive health services are more accessible in cities than in rural areas throughout the world, inequality contributes to limited access to contraception and safe and legal abortion, particularly for migrant women. The likelihood of a migrant woman successfully navigating a foreign

healthcare system to fully realize her sexual health and rights is low. This is due to barriers including fear of disclosing immigration status, language barriers, high healthcare costs, women's restricted mobility and the criminalization of abortion services in many countries. Globally, the unmet need for contraception and access to safe and legal abortion severely limits and violates migrant women's human rights, specifically their sexual and reproductive health and rights. This issue impedes the global realization of gender equality and is detrimental to migrant women's human rights to health, bodily autonomy and integrity, hindering their ability to exercise meaningful decision-making power in defining their own lives.

When women and girls are able to fully enjoy their sexual and reproductive health and rights, it contributes to the fulfilment of their rights to health, privacy, and information and also positively impacts their families and communities. It is thus imperative to respect, protect, and fulfil the sexual and reproductive rights of women in all their diversities, including immigrant and migrant women, sex workers, victims of sexual assault and human trafficking, women identifying as LGBT, indigenous women, young women and girls, among others.

Therefore, the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights recommends the inclusion of the following in the conclusions of the fifty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development:

- Uphold and accelerate the implementation of all sexual and reproductive health and rights-related commitments under the 2030 Agenda. Expand the provision of all forms of contraception, safe and legal abortion and post abortion care within cities across the globe. Ensure these services are accessible, affordable, confidential, and high-quality for all women regardless of immigration status, nationality, ethnicity, age, religion or economic status, among other identity markers. Take into account the different realities and barriers migrant and immigrant women face in accessing sexual and reproductive health and rights in urban settings.

- Ensure the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services at all phases of the migration cycle and facilitate the establishment of linkages and referral networks with migrant-friendly healthcare providers. Governments from origin and destination countries must work together with civil society and other stakeholders in creating an enabling environment for migrant workers to make meaningful choices regarding their body and sexuality, and to fully exercise their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

- Recognize migrant women as active agents in the development of sustainable cities, entitled to their full human rights, including access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Put an end to the criminalization of migrants and migration enforcement schemes that deny due process and basic human rights. Enforce policies at the national level that enable migrant women to access public services, join unions, and seek legal recourse. Expand investments in women and girl's empowerment and their education, including their comprehensive sexuality education. Accelerate the development of safe workplace policies especially within industrial sectors with large concentrations of poor, migrant female workers. Address existing gender inequalities in the workplace, allowing for more women to enter formal channels of work.

- Prioritize and enact comprehensive and fair immigration policies with special consideration for developing inclusive public health systems, including full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for immigrant and migrant women. Above all, prioritize women's universal human rights especially their sexual and reproductive health and rights, in order to strengthen the

sustainability of global cities and contribute to the wellbeing of migrant women worldwide. Ultimately, migration issues must be structurally addressed through just global socioeconomic policies that enhance sustainable development, and make migration a choice rather than a necessity.